

Appl. No. 10/620,335
Amendment dated: February 16, 2006
Reply to OA of: October 18, 2005

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8. These sheets, which include Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 replace the original sheets including Figure 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet (3 sheets)

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REMARKS

This is in response to the Official Action dated October 18, 2005. Applicants have amended the drawings and claims to more particularly define the scope of the present invention taking into consideration the outstanding Official Action.

The drawings are objected to because sheet 1 includes two new drawings that are unmarked and unlabeled. Applicants note that sheet 1 containing the two unlabeled figures was submitted with the previous Amendment in error. Only those sheets that were labeled "Replacement Sheets" and which contained corrections to Figures 5-8 were intended to be submitted. Therefore, Applicants submit herewith corrected drawing sheets of Figures 5-8, which are labeled "Replacement Sheets" and respectfully request that sheet 1 submitted with the previous Amendment be ignored. Accordingly, it is most respectfully requested that this objection to the drawings be withdrawn.

With respect to the comments directed at the Specification in the outstanding Official Action, Applicants respectfully assert that the copy of the claims submitted herewith are in accordance with 37 U.S.C. §121. Claims 5 and 12-16 are properly identified as canceled.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in the outstanding Official Action. The Official Action states that claims 19 and 20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of claims 18 and 19. Applicants note that the language of claim 19 as incorporated into claim 1 has been altered slightly to be consistent with the specification. Thus, the phrase "length of from 2 to 6 mm" has been replaced with the phrase "width (d) of from 2 mm to 6 mm" in order to be consistent with the description of the connector found on page 7 of the specification. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

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Additionally, new claim 21 has been added, which recites the limitations of claims 1, 18, 19 and 20, and therefore presents no new matter. New claims 22-24, which depend from claim 21, have also been added.


Finally, Applicants also note that claim 4 has been amended to correct an obvious error in terminology. Claim 4 has been amended to clarify that the longer supporting part is disposed on a posterior part of the thyroid, and the shorter supporting part is spaced apart from the longer supporting part.

Applicants respectfully submit that all claims pending in the present application are in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112 and, in view of the indication of allowable subject matter in the outstanding Official Action and subsequent amendment to the claims, are clearly allowable over the prior art references of record.

In view of the above comments and further amendments to the drawings and claims, favorable reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims now present in the application are most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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